

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 73 without my signature.

This bill would require the Department of Health Services to establish a Web site to facilitate purchasing prescription drugs, including links to Canadian, United Kingdom, and Irish pharmacies. I am supportive of reducing the cost of prescription medications for California residents; however, this bill over-simplifies the complex safety, trade, supply, and pricing issues involved in this marketplace. I am concerned that this bill would establish a mechanism to facilitate an illegal practice, expose the state to potential tort liability, and potentially jeopardize patient safety. Finally, there would be increased fiscal impact on the General Fund for development and implementation of a state drug importation safety program.

Much more can and should be done to assist Californians in receiving cost-effective, quality healthcare. My Administration worked with Senators Ortiz and Poochigian to author Senate Bill 19 and provide safe and legal prescription drugs to over 5 million uninsured Californians at an estimated 40 percent discount. In addition to support from doctors and pharmacists, this effort was supported by consumer groups like the AARP, the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, the Mental Health Association of California, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, California Arthritis Foundation Council, Epilepsy Foundation of Northern California and the Alzheimer's Aid Society.

Unfortunately, despite the overwhelming support from these consumer groups the measure was blocked by the Legislature, so more work needs to be done.

My administration will continue to work to find ways to help California's uninsured have access to safe, legal and affordable prescription drugs.

For these reasons, I am returning this bill without my signature.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger